

Training and Development Agency for Schools QCF Assessment Principles



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1. Introduction

1.1 The Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA) is the sector body for the school workforce in England. The TDA's vision for qualifications for school support staff was set out in its Sector Qualification Strategy for school support staff which was published in January 2009 after widespread consultation with the sector.

1.2 These Assessment Principles set out the approaches to QCF unit/qualification assessment not already described in the Regulatory Arrangements for the Qualifications and Credit Framework issued by Ofqual. The information is intended to support the quality assurance processes of Awarding Organisations that offer qualifications in the Sector, and should be read alongside these. It should also be read alongside individual unit assessment requirements.

1.3 These principles are derived from those developed by Skills for Care and Development (SfCD). A large number of units covered by the SfCD assessment principles are included in qualifications for the children's workforce in schools to support integrated ways of working and workforce mobility. Consistency of approach in assessment across units developed by different sectors will support awarding organisations to develop clear and fit for purpose assessment methodologies.

1.4 These principles will ensure a consistent approach to those elements of assessment which require further interpretation and definition, and support sector confidence in the QCF arrangements.

1.5 These principles apply to those units developed by the TDA. Units included in qualifications for school based staff that have been developed by other Sector Skills Councils or Sector Bodies will need to be assessed in accordance with any assessment principles and requirements set by those organisations.

2. Assessment Principles

2.1. Assessment decisions for criteria that must be assessed in the workplace, as identified in unit assessment requirements, must be made in a real work environment by an occupationally competent assessor.

2.2 Assessment decisions for criteria that must be assessed in the workplace (competence based assessment criteria) must be made by an assessor with the expertise to make assessment decisions.

2.3 Competence based assessment must include direct observation as the main source of evidence.

2.4 Simulation may only be utilised as an assessment method for competence based assessment criteria where this is specified in the assessment requirements of the unit.

2.5 Expert witnesses can be used for direct observation where:

- they have occupational expertise for specialist areas, or
- the observation is of a particularly sensitive nature.

The use of expert witnesses should be determined and agreed by the assessor.

2.6 Assessment of criteria not identified in the unit assessment requirements as requiring assessment in the workplace may take place in or outside of a real work environment.

2.7 Assessment decisions for knowledge based assessment criteria must be made by an occupationally knowledgeable assessor.

2.8 Assessment decisions for knowledge based assessment criteria must be made by an assessor qualified to make assessment decisions. Where assessment is electronic or undertaken according to a set grid, the assessment decisions are made by the person who has set the answers.

3. Internal Quality Assurance

3.1 Internal quality assurance is key to ensuring that the assessment of evidence for units is of a consistent and appropriate quality. Those carrying out internal quality assurance must be occupationally knowledgeable in the area they are assuring and be qualified to make quality assurance decisions as determined by the Awarding Organisation.

4. Definitions

4.1 Occupationally competent:

This means that each assessor must be capable of carrying out the full requirements within the competency units they are assessing. Being occupationally competent means they are also occupationally knowledgeable. This occupational competence should be maintained annually through clearly demonstrable continuing learning and professional development.

4.2 Occupationally knowledgeable:

This means that each assessor should have relevant knowledge and understanding, and be able to assess this in units:

- designed to test specific knowledge and understanding, or
- where knowledge and understanding are components of competency.

This occupational knowledge should be maintained annually through clearly demonstrable continuing learning and professional development.

4.3 Qualified to make assessment decisions:

Awarding Organisations must ensure that those making assessment decisions have the necessary expertise to do so, which may include having, or be working towards, appropriate qualifications.

4.4 Qualified to make quality assurance decisions:

Awarding Organisations will determine what will qualify those undertaking internal quality assurance to make decisions about that quality assurance.

4.5 Expert witness:

An expert witness must:

- have a working knowledge of the QCF units for which they are providing witness testimony
- be occupationally competent in their area of expertise
- have EITHER any qualification that includes assessment of workplace performance AND/OR a professional work role which involves evaluating the everyday practice of staff.

Training and Development Agency for Schools

Piccadilly Gate

Store Street

Manchester

M1 2WD

www.tda.uk

Publications line 0845 6060 323

TDA switchboard 0870 4960 123



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